

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-9. (Canceled)

10. (Currently amended) A method of using ~~the~~ a positive resist composition according to ~~claim 1~~, comprising: applying the positive resist composition on a substrate to form a positive resist film, performing selective exposure of the positive resist film, conducting a developing treatment to form a resist pattern, and subjecting the resist pattern to a thermal flow treatment, thereby narrowing the resist pattern, wherein the positive resist composition comprises:

a resin component (A) containing an acid dissociable dissolution inhibiting group whose alkali solubility increases under action of acid; and

an acid generator component (B) that generates acid on exposure, wherein the resin component (A) is a copolymer comprising a first structural unit (a1) derived from a hydroxystyrene and a second structural unit (a2) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester containing an alcoholic hydroxyl group, in which 10 mol% or more and 25 mol% or less of a combined total of hydroxyl groups within the structural units (a1) and alcoholic hydroxyl groups within the structural units (a2) are protected with the acid dissociable dissolution inhibiting groups.

a weight average molecular weight of the copolymer prior to protection with the acid dissociable dissolution inhibiting groups is 4,000 or more and 8,000 or less,

a molar ratio between the first structural units (a1) and the second structural units (a2) within the resin component (A) prior to protection with the acid dissociable dissolution inhibiting groups is within a range from 80:20 to 70:30,

the second structural unit (a2) is derived from a (meth)acrylate ester containing an adamantyl group with an alcoholic hydroxyl group, and

the acid dissociable dissolution inhibiting group is a 1-lower alkoxyalkyl group.

11. (Currently amended) A method of forming a resist pattern comprising: forming a positive resist film on a substrate using a positive resist composition according to ~~claim 1~~:

performing selective exposure of the positive resist film;
conducting a developing treatment to form a resist pattern; and
subjecting the resist pattern to a thermal flow treatment, thereby narrowing the resist pattern, wherein the positive resist composition comprises:

a resin component (A) containing an acid dissociable dissolution inhibiting group whose alkali solubility increases under action of acid; and

an acid generator component (B) that generates acid on exposure, wherein
the resin component (A) is a copolymer comprising a first structural unit (a1) derived
from a hydroxystyrene and a second structural unit (a2) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester
containing an alcoholic hydroxyl group, in which 10 mol% or more and 25 mol% or less of a
combined total of hydroxyl groups within the structural units (a1) and alcoholic hydroxyl groups
within the structural units (a2) are protected with the acid dissociable dissolution inhibiting
groups,

a weight average molecular weight of the copolymer prior to protection with the acid
dissociable dissolution inhibiting groups is 4,000 or more and 8,000 or less,

a molar ratio between the first structural units (a1) and the second structural units (a2)
within the resin component (A) prior to protection with the acid dissociable dissolution inhibiting
groups is within a range from 80:20 to 70:30,

the second structural unit (a2) is derived from a (meth)acrylate ester containing an
adamantyl group with an alcoholic hydroxyl group, and

the acid dissociable dissolution inhibiting group is a 1-lower alkoxyalkyl group.

12-22. (Canceled)